



# Reduce Stress:

## 14 ways to strengthen your coping skills...

How you deal with daily stress depends on your coping skills. Experts categorize them in many different ways, but there is one important distinction to keep in mind: Unhealthy coping skills hold you back, while healthy coping skills reduce stress and make it easier to reach your goals.

As a bonus, having constructive new strategies may also make it easier to break habits like overspending and emotional eating. That's because you'll experience less temptation when you have more fulfilling substitutes.

With practice, you can transform the way you deal with challenges.

# Start by experimenting with these ideas to see what works best for you.

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**Exercise regularly.** Physical activity is one of the quickest and most effective ways to cope with stress. Visit your local gym or yoga studio. For extra relief, work out in green spaces outdoors or invite a friend to join you.

**Express your creativity.** Making art is another way to relax and heal. You might be drawn to writing poetry or arranging flowers.

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**Expand your options.** Stress can make it difficult to think clearly. If you feel stuck, reexamine your choices. You'll probably discover new opportunities.

**Keep it simple.** While it's beneficial to understand the root causes of your behavior, you may need to take a break sometimes. Lower your expectations if you're wasting too much energy on an insignificant issue.

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**Start a journal.** Writing about your experiences may be therapeutic. A journal can help you spot your triggers and create plans for dealing with them.

**Limit your screen time.** Do you feel less happy after you watch unpleasant news stories or compare yourself to others on social media? Be more selective about your use of technology.

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**Seek distraction.** While avoiding your troubles can backfire, it may be okay to shift your attention until you're ready to attempt a solution. Be sure to distract yourself with something harmless like soft music rather than alcohol.

**Live mindfully.** Meditation and other mindfulness practices will strengthen your coping skills. You'll find it easier to focus on the present moment and remain calm.

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**Focus on growth.** Difficult situations are easier to accept when you look on the bright side. Setbacks can teach you important lessons about yourself and what you really want out of life. It may also help to reframe events so you can focus on solutions rather than dwelling on disappointments.

**Evaluate risks.** Unhealthy coping skills often provide temporary relief at the expense of your long-term wellbeing. Try slowing down and thinking through the consequences of your choices.

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**Embrace change.** It's easier to adapt when you believe that change is natural and inevitable. Start with small exercises and work your way up.

**Follow routines.** At the same time, you can give yourself a greater sense of security by being organized. Establishing daily routines increases your efficiency so you have more leeway for dealing with unexpected circumstances.

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# 13

**Stay connected.** Having family and friends you can count on makes you more resilient. Cultivate mutually supportive relationships so you can talk about sensitive issues and receive the help you need.

**Consider counseling.** Your coping skills are usually the long-term product of your personal history and background. However, you can make positive changes at any stage in your life. If you need more assistance, consider working with a professional counselor.

# 14

While you may be unable to avoid difficult situations, you can choose how you react to them. Develop your own individual set of coping skills that will make your life more peaceful and rewarding.